



Tip of the

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Code of Ethical Conduct for Prevention Professionals

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Most developing fields have an ethical code to guide behavior. The field of substance abuse prevention needs to develop a unified code of ethics to serve as a guide for professional conduct. Circumstances and situations often arise in the helping professions that are both complex and difficult to handle. A code of ethics helps people make decisions when faced with problematic situations.

As an emerging discipline, ethical codes of conduct need to be developed and advanced to act as a positive benchmark for professional behavior. The National Association of Prevention Professionals and Advocates (NAPPA), which is no longer in existence, originally developed a code of ethics for prevention professionals (Susan H. Mowrer and Ted N. Strader, *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, vol. 13, no. 1). Some elements to consider in a code of ethics are briefly mentioned below.

Nondiscrimination:

- Professionals should not discriminate against recipients or colleagues based on race, religion, national origin, sex, age, sexual orientation, economic condition, or physical or mental disability.
- Professionals should broaden understanding and acceptance of cultural and individual difference and render services that are sensitive to differences.

Competence:

- Prevention professionals should strive to continually improve competence through a commitment to learning and professional development.
- Services should be rendered carefully and promptly.
- Report all unethical conduct to appropriate authorities.

Integrity:

- Professionals should perform the highest sense of integrity in order to maintain and broaden public confidence.
- Personal gain and advantage should not subordinate service.
- Professionals should not misrepresent qualification or affiliations.

Nature of Services:

- Above all, do no harm to service recipients. Be respectful and non-exploitative.
- Report evidence of child abuse and follow up to ensure proper action is taken.

Confidentiality:

- Confidential information acquired during service delivery shall be safeguarded from disclosure.

Ethical obligations to community and society:

- According to their consciences, prevention professionals should be proactive on public policy and legislative issues.

This is a brief summary of the many components necessary to formulate a code of ethical conduct for prevention professionals. The development of a unified code of ethics that describe the appropriate behaviors for substance abuse prevention professionals is an essential component of the substance abuse prevention profession.

The six regional CAPTs are funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. For more information on this Tip of the CAPT or other Western CAPT services, please visit our web site: **www.westcapt.org** or our best practices website: **www.open.org/westcapt**.

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